

mummy's gin) and water bottles for them. At first mummy & daddy said it looked and tasted different -- maybe there was a new distilling process or maybe it was the aftermath of Christmas and too much brandy-soaked pudding. But they never suspected me, because they figured I'd turned over a new leaf: I was now cleaning my fingernails, washing my face, washing my clothes and even putting polish on my shoes.

So mummy & daddy have continued drinking water, getting just as drunk but feeling much happier and less worried about appearances, and I am becoming more like their old selves every day.

RIVER BED

I ride my bike to the L.A. River bed each week to pan for mud. I love mud but I don't want too much because then I'd just worry. If I find say a thousand dollars worth of mud a month I'm content and can buy some clothes and save for a car and a vacation.

Of course, you have to purify and dry the mud and trim it before it's ready for the market, and the best way to do this, I've found, is to keep it under the floorboards for ten days, then test it by licking a little like a lollipop, then rubbing my face with it. And if my face and tongue don't break out soon it's pure, so I put it in my backpack, get on my bike, and luxuriously ride it down to the mudsmith, who is a very dirty man.

BREAKAGE

My foot has recovered from being broken and ruining mummy & daddy's Easter vacation, and mummy & daddy have untied me -- so long as I'm careful never to break anything again, and with the certain promise they'll hang me by the toes for six months if I so much as fracture a fingernail.

I take this all very seriously, each morning awakening to check my whole interior for damage, humming benign tunes so my knee say won't suddenly shatter as I gingerly get out of bed. Then I dress with great deliberateness, hold on to the padded walls, hobble down the padded stairs and chew my padded breakfast thoroughly before swallowing -- because mummy & daddy would probably kill me if I choked, especially as the summer vacation is getting so near.

Walking to school is a nightmare of cement and cracks, curbs, aggressive pedestrians and cars coming from so many directions I'd faint if I were less afraid of breaking my nose. But the real obstacle course begins at school -- classmates patting me on the back or just waving their arms dangerously near, desk lids trying to snap up my fingers, slippery wood floors, hard steep staircases, doorways, chairs, books, paper, pencils, windows and teachers.

Still I do have impulses to do the opposite of mummy & daddy's wishes, and right now, as the going home bell sounds with sufficient velocity to crack my skull, I'd like to take an axe and with it break every bone in my body.

OBSCENITY

Whenever I call a friend I have this desire to dial the wrong number and be obscene. I never do it but as I talk to my favorite people, cracking jokes and praising them, I make lewd gestures, take off my clothes and squeeze my breasts and roll my eyes in ecstasy. So I guess when they call me they do the same thing, because I'm not so unusual and could be a very good telephone operator because I have a clear, cultured voice, even in the middle of an orgasm, and can put my clothes back, clear my throat and brush my hair with the promptness and grace of the Queen of England. The pay is good too, I hear, so every time I rip my panties passionately I can join the long line of men and women buying new ones and thinking with the ferocity of perfectly normal geniuses of new ways to be obscene and get away with it.

-- Nichola Manning

Long Beach CA

POETIC NOISE

On St. Patrick's Day
the New York Post
was printed green
and I got fired.
It was a Wednesday, payday,
and I got paid and fired
and I stumbled out of a gray windowless warehouse